

Index to Interview with Salim Khan  
Sacramento's Pakistani Community  
December 1, 1983  
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Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey

TAPE 1, SIDE 1

Begin Introduction

- 2:00 Early life in Pakistan. Born 1923 in what was Northwest India at the time to a farming family. Gursti Village, Kattuk district. Had a high school education there. Joined British Merchant Navy--June, 1942 in Bombay. Travelle/d world, ended up in dry dock in Brooklyn Navy Yard--turning ship into troop carrier. Salim got sick with what turned out to be appendicitis. Consulted a countryman who suggested he go to California, where he saved money from working for an operation.
- 8:00 1945--offered partnership in hotel in Sacramento. At that time only 2 places to board for Pakistanis. At 5th and L Streets--bar and restaurant for Americans (Moslems don't drink). At 211 Capitol Ave. sleeping accomodations upstairs, Pakistani restaurant downstairs. Owner called Kattuk after area he came from (name of tribe). 1943-44--Omar Khan was the first to buy hotels in Sacramento. He leased from Japanese when they were sent to detention camps. Pakistanis couldn't actually purchase property: didn't have money and against the law.
- 12:15 Salim joined the U.S. Army in 1946, trained at Ft. Lewis, Washington. Spent one year in Korea. One and one-half years in army altogether. Being in army made him immediately eligible for citizenship.
- 14:30 Came back to Sacramento, bought a small hotel at 5th and K Streets which he kept for four or five years, then he bought an apartment house in West Sacramento. In 1951, during the Korean War, he got a job at McClellan Air Field, worked there until 1967. First was a mechanics helper, ended up in shipping and receiving department. Meanwhile he bought a lot in West Sacramento and built an apartment house in the early 1960s. Redevelopment had taken all the cheaper hotels.

- 18:30 Salim started buying hotels in Stockton where he and other countrymen could afford it. He still owns two of the five he once had. From 1967-77 he owned a 120-room hotel. In 1977 he retired and took a trip to the Middle East and Europe. After six months rest he got bored, then bought two motels on 16th St., including Camellia City Lodge where his office is located and interview took place.
- 21:15 Education. Had high school back home, some English, could read and write, but not speak it well. Time in army helped with speaking. When he came back he went to Sutter High School to take a test for his diploma, took three months of American history and then got it. In the early 50s he did two years at City College, but then got too busy with family and work and had to quit. Tried again in the mid-60s, but still too busy. Finally in 1973 he went to CSUS where he got a BA in Social Science in 1977 and an MA in History in 1981. His thesis was A Brief History of Pakistanis in the Western United States.
- 23:30 Marriage/Immigration. In 1949 he married a Pakistani woman who was born in the U.S. Her father was Pakistani and her mother was Mexican. The immigration situation--first Pakistanis came here in 1901, all celebrations in Sacramento were held in the Labor Temple because there was no Mosque. In 1917--immigration ended, no Asian could come to the U.S., not even wives or children. Mostly men here and if they left the U.S. they couldn't come back. 1917-1946--no person came to the U.S. from India/Pakistan unless a sailor or some special circumstance. Everyone he met when first arrived had been here a long time. In 1946 the law was changed and Pakistanis here applied for citizenship. His wife's father had married a Mexican woman. In 1949 he married Olga in Sacramento in the Mosque. They have five daughters, now (1983) ages 33, 31, 27, 22, 16. Names are: Jamila (eldest), Shamin, Yasmin/Kathy, Parmin/Sandy, and Sabrina (the youngest). Olga's father still lives in Phoenix.
- 32:30 Mosque in Sacramento built in 1947. Pakistanis from all over U.S. donated money--it was the first Mosque in the western U.S. Salim and Olga were married there by a priest from Pakistan.



Tape 1, Side 2

- Begin Immigration. 1946 law allowed 100 Pakistanis per year into the U.S. From 1917-46 there was no immigration. The 1946 law was passed because of World War II sacrifices by the Pakistanis. Land purchase right were returned which had been taken away in 1920; citizenship rights returned; and 100 people per year allowed in from each country. A bill for the Chinese had passed in 1943--and they were allowed 100/year too. In 1952 the McCarran Immigration Act was passed and Pakistan got a quota (100) separate from India.
- 4:00 Pakistan created from the northwest part of India. There were two parts (west and east), but now there is only one. The east is now the separate country of Bangladesh. There was always a majority of Moslems in Pakistan--now it is about 98% of the population. In 1965 immigration laws were liberalized again--President Johnson helped pass a new bill with no quota system. Divided equally to all the world--10,000/year, but one must have qualifications to get in or be related to someone already here. In 1983 there are over 50,000 Pakistanis in the U.S. It is a brain drain to Pakistan--educated people train there, then move to the U.S. for the economic opportunities. Especially doctors and engineers. Teachers and lawyers don't do so well here, but business people do.
- 10:00 Medical profession is needed badly in Pakistan. Salim's village of 50,000 people has no doctor. People who call themselves doctors and untrained and really "butchers". The word for doctor is "hakim".
- 12:15 Pakistan's economic health--next to the U.S. it is tops in agriculture and has one of the best irrigation systems in the world. Good land produces lots of food.
- 14:30 Salim's two oldest daughters went to live in Pakistan in 1960, when the family went for a visit. He wanted the girls to learn religion and the language and culture. They stayed about three and one-half years with his father. The girls enjoyed it--they came back not speaking English and had to be tutored over the summer to go back to school again. They were 8 and 10 when they went over to Pakistan.

- 17:00 Work his children do: three are graduates of CSUS, one did work in Public Administration with USC Extension. The oldest works for Assembly-woman Cathy Wright as a legislative assistant. The second, Shamin, is head of personnel for the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The third girl works for the Department of Motor Vehicles in Sacramento. The fourth is attending U.C. Davis studying Foreign Relations and wants to work for the State Department. The fifth attends Kennedy High School. All are intelligent and motivated. Two were at CSUS when Salim was there: Shamin graduated just after he got there and Yasmin/Kathy started while he was still there.
- 20:30 Salim started the Pakistani Students Association at CSUS while there, although there were only seven or eight Pakistanis at the time. In 1976 they had a big dinner of Pakistani food attended by the faculty, other students and members of the administration, including then President James Bond. They also showed a Pakistani movie. At other times two travelling groups of Pakistani singers entertained--one group was from Canada.
- 24:00 Building the Mosque: in 1944 Sabdullah Khan visited Sacramento from Detroit and introduced the idea of building a Mosque here. There was a meeting in the Labor Temple of 200-300 people from all over the Sacramento Valley area. It was agreed to build a Mosque and social hall, and a minimum of \$50 was asked per person. \$17,000 was raised that night. Sabdullah Khan raised money all over the U.S. In Arizona is one of the richest Pakistani communities in the U.S.--they donated money as well. In 1946 the land at 411 V St. was purchased. In 1947 a two-story brick building was erected (50' x 90').
- 29:45 In 1979 a school building near the Mosque was built with five classrooms. The opening ceremonies were held in February of 1982. It was built at a total cost of \$96,000. Currently a minaret is being constructed free-standing from the Mosque. Nowadays it is a symbol, but is used to call for prayer five times a day. It will be used occasionally for celebrations or to see the moon, as they use a lunar calendar. It will be covered with special tiles and calligraphy.



Tape 2, Side 1

Begin Introduction  
1:00 Moslem religion believes in all prophets, including most of those in Christianity.

3:00 Mosque has a Pakistani congregation. Some Black Muslims attend and some Arabs. Arabs have a place on Folsom Blvd. funded by the Saudi government while the Black Muslims have a storefront in Oak Park. The Mosque is 90-95% Pakistani. The school teaches mostly religion now. Salim taught language for a while (Urdu). Around 50 attend the school, which is full-time in the summer and part-time in the winter. People donate money so all kids can come, not just those who can afford the fees.

7:15 Politics: In 1947 the first ambassador to the U.S. visited here. There is an annual celebration on August 14--Independence Day--called Pakistan Day. In 1950 the Pakistan National Association was formed. The first Prime Minister of Pakistan visited Sacramento as well because it is a major Pakistani center. Since then every high-ranking official visiting the U.S. has visited Sacramento. In December, 1982, the current President visited, making no other stops except Washington, D.C. The governor saw him at the airport. The Sacramento Bee helped publicize their events. The 1950 visit of the Prime Minister had a reception at the Crocker Art Museum and a visit with Governor Warren.

15:15 The World Affairs Council met at the Mosque occasionally in the 50s. They were active in the Northern California Organization for Citizenship, organized by the Immigration Department. They met monthly in the early 50s, and had an annual parade and a big dinner. They helped to get more people to apply for citizenship. Many different ethnic groups in this area belonged. It lasted until around 1960, when there was not quite so much need. The United Nations Organization had big dinners with people in national costume, serving national foods, flags, entertainment. The chapter still exists, but Salim is not a member any more.

22:15 The Pakistani community was involved in the Camellia festival and took part in the Fourth of July parades. Between 1950-60 they were very active in joining community organizations, but not so much after 1970.

24:30 Money raised in Sacramento for Pakistan. The Pakistani National Association, during two wars with India, sent \$25,000 (1965) and \$27,000 (1971). Help was also sent when natural disasters struck as well. In 1950-71 there was a Consul General's office in San Francisco which helped keep connections open. Prime Minister Bhutto closed it to save money and sold the building. All that remains is the Embassy in New York, so visiting heads of state are constantly asked when it will be returned. Salim helps people in Sacramento with pasasport problems.

29:00 In the 1950s or 60s, a newspaper editor from Pakistan was selected by the Sacramento Bee to come here for three months and write a series of articles on Pakistani life for the Bee. Someone from the paper went there to select the editor, whose name was Mr. Oud, whose English was good enough for this to work. Frank McPeak from the Bee called Salim to help find a place for the man to stay, so he shared a place with two young men from Pakistan who were here training at McClellan Air Field.

Tape 2, Side 2

Begin What did the first Pakistanis do here for work? Most were in agriculture, later the hotel business. The first came in 1901 through San Francisco and did farm work. Between 1910-12 they began acquiring farms in the Gridley, Willows, and Chico areas, on hard pan land no one else wanted. The Japanese, Koreans, Indians and Pakistanis discovered this land was good for rice because it holds the necessary water in. After 1920 all Asians were prohibited from buying or leasing land. Some sold their farms and left the country, some went back to farm labor, some put their land in their attorney's names. The attorney got a profit from the deal, but the Pakistanis had no legal protection. This worked until 1946 when the law was changed. There were only two or three cases like this and some refused to give back the land so the Pakistanis had to buy it back. One attorney was running for judge at that time and refused to even sell the land back, so they threatened to turn themselves as well as him in to the authorities. He apparently thought the better of it and sold. Some of the Pakistanis in Arizona, married to American or Mexican-American women, had put their land in their wives or childrens names.



- 8:00                   When Salim first got to Sacramento, he did farm work, pruning pears and plums. He saved money for his appendix operation, then later to buy a partnership in his first hotel. After the army he did farm work again, then bought another hotel. In 1951 went to work at McClellan. Most Pakistanis worked on farms. From 1945-55 about 50% of the hotels in the lower part of town were owned by Pakistanis until redevelopment in 1955. Now they only six or seven hotels, but own about 80% of the working class hotels in Stockton around the Port area. Redevelopment is happening there too, so many are selling.
- 12:30                   Pakistani brain drain--educated people are leaving for the United States. Now in American around Woodland and Lodi people work on farms, in Sacramento some work in canneries, at Campbell Soup, in lumber yards. Post-1965 doctors, engineers and professors came in. There are two extremes: farm workers or professionals, which is dictated by the immigration laws. Only two ways in which people can enter the U.S. is if they have relatives already here or are educated professionals. The U.S. Labor Dept. decides which professions are open and which are full.
- 18:30                   Mosque offices Salim has held: in 1955 he was selected Secretary, then in 1958 he became working President. The first thing he did was to change the name of the Mosque. He felt the building was not used as it should be, since it was open only for celebrations. In 1960 he went to Pakistan and selected a man to come here as a teacher and religious leader--the Imam--who was here until 1974. Baptism for a Moslem means the baby is now a Moslem. Parents teach children until they are 15 or 16 years old, from then on the kids make their own decisions. In 1975 another Imam came, but he is more involved in politics than religion. Since 1958 Salim has been in one office or another with the Mosque. From 1951-53 he was President of the Pakistan National Organization and has also been secretary and vice-president. Since 1958 he concentrated on Mosque activities so hasn't been so active. He was once vice-president of the Citizenship Organization. He is mostly interested in religion and the upkeep of the children's religion and Pakistani culture.

- 27:30           Pakistanis are Caucasians, but were always labelled as Asians by the immigration people. They finally were recognized as Aryan (Caucasian) people, and now by a curious twist can't get minority status considerations. His daughter couldn't get into UC Davis law school and tried the minority approach and was turned down on these grounds.
- 30:00           Salim found a Pakistani cemetery plot from the 1930s in the City Cemetery on Broadway. Some of the first Pakistani settlers to this area are buried there. He recognized the names as being from the area then part of India but later made into Pakistan.